

## II. TELEPHONE INTERVIEWING TECHNIQUES

### A. Introduction

As a member of the Project HOPE evaluation team, you, the telephone interviewer, play an important role in the overall success of the study. You are one of the links to the women who will be providing valuable information about themselves over the course of their involvement in the study. This chapter provides information on basic interviewing techniques and principles applied by successful interviewers.

A professional interviewer helps each woman feel at ease and comfortable with the interview. One key to accomplishing this goal is be fully informed about the study and the data collection instruments and procedures. Helping you become well informed about Project HOPE will be a major objective of the interviewer training for the project. However, if you do not feel that this objective has been adequately reached at the end of the training, please inform your supervisor and additional training will be provided.

You have two major roles to fulfill as an evaluation interviewer for this study:

- That of a trained technician who applies appropriate techniques to each interview; and
- That of a representative of Children's National Medical Center, an institutional partner in the Initiative to Reduce Infant Mortality and Morbidity in the District of Columbia.

In fulfilling these roles during each contact with participating women of Project HOPE you should:

- Communicate a positive attitude;
- Demonstrate familiarity with the questionnaire contents so that the interview proceeds in a professional manner;
- Maintain control of the interview; and
- Assume a non-judgmental, noncommittal, neutral approach to the sample woman and the subject matter so that she feels comfortable answering the questions truthfully and completely.

As far as the sample women are concerned, they are providing information to a representative of this study who cares and who will put that information to good use. Therefore, your understanding of the task and your commitment to it are crucial to the success of the study. This study will hopefully have far-reaching effects on the welfare of pregnant women. You are entrusted with treating all aspects of the study with the seriousness and attention they deserve.

Your responsibilities as a Project HOPE evaluation interviewer are to:

- Attend and successfully complete an initial training session;
- Follow prescribed procedures to attempt to complete all necessary work with each assigned sample woman;
- Observe all quality control procedures and meet established performance standards;
- Maintain confidentiality of data collected and identity of sample women at all times;
- File routine administrative records as required; and
- Commit your time and effort for the duration of the study and report for work as scheduled.

## **B. Sample Women's Rights**

It is important to the success of the survey that you become skilled at obtaining cooperation and overcoming refusals from sample members. However, your job is to get completed interviews while respecting the rights of our sample women.

The rights of the women must be recognized and protected by all Project HOPE staff. Verbal or written assurances to sample women have no meaning if they are violated or contradicted by the actions of any member of the research team. Concern has been expressed in recent years about the rights of individuals who are asked to participate in surveys. Project HOPE survey procedures are designed to protect an individual's rights and comply with laws for the protection of human subjects who participate in research projects. Among the rights that must be protected are:

- The right to accurate representation;
- The right of informed consent;
- The right to refuse; and,
- The right of privacy.

The **right to accurate representation** is simply an extension of honesty in interpersonal relationships. Sample women have the right to receive completely accurate information about the study, its sponsor, their expected involvement and the reasons for the study.

*You cannot tell* a woman that the interview will take just a minute when you know that it will take twenty. You cannot tell a woman that she must participate in the interview for any reason.

*You can tell* a woman that the interview will average about 60 minutes, depending on her responses, and that you can schedule an appointment at another time if she is unable to be interviewed just then.

*You can tell* a woman that her participation is voluntary, and that her opinions and experiences are important because they represent the opinions and experiences of a large number of other people whom will not be interviewed.

*You can tell* a woman how the public, in general, may benefit from the survey.

*You can tell* a woman that many people enjoy being interviewed. It gives them a chance to express their opinions and relate their experiences.

The **right of informed consent** requires that sample members be provided with adequate information to make an informed decision about participation. They must be expressly informed of:

- the voluntary nature of their participation;
- the purposes of the study;
- the procedures that will be followed;
- any discomforts, risks, or benefits that might be associated with participation; and
- sources from which additional information about the study can be obtained.

All of this information is included in the Consent Form that an eligible sample woman with at least one risk factor was asked to sign when she was recruited into the study at the clinic site. A copy of the Main Study Consent Form is shown in **Appendix A**. (Women signed a separate consent form for the screening activities.) This information is made available to all eligible women so that they can base their decision to participate or not to participate in the study on full knowledge of the study and the consequences of involvement. The individual must also be informed that consent may be withdrawn and participation discontinued at any time. The purpose of this informed consent procedure is to protect persons from the possibility of injury, including physical, psychological, or social injury, as a consequence of participation in any research study.

The **right to refuse** refers to a sample woman's right to refuse to participate without fear of intimidation. While it is helpful to know why individuals do not want to participate in a study, those who refuse have no obligation to state a reason for their decision. You must distinguish between pressuring women to participate and providing them with sufficient information upon which to base a rational decision about participation.

The **right of privacy** is an issue that is currently receiving a great deal of attention from legislators, civil rights advocates, concerned citizens, and organizations that sponsor and conduct research studies. In addition to constitutional guarantees against invasion of privacy, specific federal legislation (The Privacy Act of 1974) assures that certain elements of an individual's personal privacy are protected against undue inquiry and subsequent use and dissemination of information collected.

### **C. Gaining Cooperation**

It is important to the success of the study that you become skilled at obtaining cooperation and overcoming refusals from sample women. When presenting the scripted introduction, (see Section E) read it verbatim and be certain to pronounce the words clearly. Practice the introduction until you can present it in such a manner that your sound confident, sincere, and spontaneous. Deliver an introduction at a conversational pace. Rushing through an introduction gives an impression of lack of confidence and may also cause the listener to misunderstand. Try not to pause before asking the first question following the introduction. A pause tends to indicate that you are waiting for approval or disapproval or for questions from the respondent.

When answering questions or overcoming objections, respond positively to concerns voiced and do not argue with or alienate the respondent. Listen to any questions carefully and attempt to answer them briefly. Do not respond with more details than are required to meet a concern because additional details may produce more questions or raise new concerns. Also, when you cannot answer a question, don't hesitate to tell a respondent that you do not know the answer to that question, but you will get an answer to her question and arrange a call back to provide the information.

It is important to the validity of the survey results and the usefulness of the study that interviews are completed with the highest possible percentage of women, both in the intervention and usual care groups, with an absolute minimum of "don't know" and "refused" responses. You will be trained in and will implement procedures designed to you them meet this goal. Your supervisor will be available to assist with problem cases. Ultimately, however, the achievement of the desired goals will depend upon your dedication to conduct your work professionally to obtain high response rates. Guidelines for use in working with sample women to enlist their cooperation are discussed in the following paragraphs. As you gain experience with the Project HOPE evaluation procedures, you and other interviewers will add to and refine these guidelines. Appropriate approaches that prove successful with various women should be shared so that other interviewers can be informed and benefit from your experience.

### **D. Interviewing Style**

Regardless of whether you conduct the survey on the telephone or in person, rapport is one of the most important tools of the interviewer. Rapport is achieved through sensitivity to the woman and her circumstances. This sensitivity, although difficult to learn, can be developed gradually. Part of your job is to be aware of how you are being received. The eventual aim is to

nurture an ability on your part to predict and even modify the woman's reaction. Once you are able to do this, you will be better equipped to counter an objection with an appropriate response.

An abrasive manner is not desirable. Although a pushy interviewer can occasionally "bully" people into participation, this tactic is not appropriate and could adversely affect the quality of the data collected. Likewise, an interviewer who is too passive will be unsuccessful. Passivity conveys a lack of confidence or commitment to an action. This attitude will not motivate the basically neutral or "disinterested" woman. You will have to "win over" such a person - to convince her of the importance of participation. In a sense, you must "sell" the survey to each woman. In order to do this effectively, you must be thoroughly convinced of the importance of the work. If you are not convinced of the validity of the project, the woman will never be convinced.

When you contact a woman, your initial task is to establish a friendly but professional relationship. Many people are apprehensive or fearful of any stranger who contacts them. Others may feel that they have no interest in the research topic or that they will not know enough to give correct answers to your questions. Your first remarks must neutralize such fears. Your own confident and professional manner must reassure the woman and set a tone that will enable you to gain the woman's confidence and cooperation and complete the interview.

## **E. Interviewing Skills**

There are interviewing skills that will help you convince an individual to cooperate and answer your questions, as well as help you obtain answers that are accurate and complete. In general, the skills discussed below are relevant to both in-person and telephone interviewing. Some skills, however, may be viewed as more pertinent to telephone interviewing.

- **Be Prepared**. Make sure you understand and are comfortable with the project and the questionnaire before you start the interview. Sound professional, and introduce yourself by using your first and last names.
- **Be Friendly**. A pleasant voice and friendly manner can almost guarantee a successful interview. The introduction is the woman's first impression of you. In person, you can impress the participant with your winning smile. On the telephone, you have to "put the smile in your voice." A cheerful, but natural and professional sounding tone is what you want to strive for. Talk to the woman in a normal conversational tone.
- **Be Alert, Speak Clearly, and Listen Closely**. Whether you are approaching a woman at a health care facility, hospital, or contacting her on the telephone, the conditions are not optimal for getting her attention and explaining who you are and why you are contacting her. You will need to be alert and prepared for the different reactions from the women. Even during the follow-up interview for which the woman knows you will be calling, the actual call might catch her at an inopportune time.

The introduction is designed to present the questionnaire in a way that will increase your chances of getting the interview, but the woman must hear you. If you rattle off the introduction, the woman won't hear parts of it and will miss important information. In that case, some women will ask you to repeat yourself--but many won't, and will either misunderstand why you're contacting them, or get irritated and refuse. The same thing can happen if you misread the introduction, stumble over words or otherwise sound garbled. Participants do not want to hear you practice the introduction; you need to be comfortable with it before you use it.

Some participants will interrupt you with a question. If you do not or cannot respond appropriately, you risk losing the interview. Your training will provide you with information about the questionnaire. However, you must be alert and listen to the woman in order to use that information. Interviewers have to be good listeners.

- **Be Positive.** Always assume that the woman is going to participate. Immediately after you read the introduction to the woman, begin the interview. Avoid asking questions such as, "*Are you busy now?*" or "*Could we do this interview now?*" Be prepared to assure the woman that you are not selling anything.
- **Be Assertive.** Emphasize the importance and the interesting nature of the interview and do not be intimidated by a rude or impatient woman. She may have had a bad day or may be going through some type of difficult situation such as a problem with the children, or at work or something else. Problems can make anyone short-tempered; do not take it personally. Remember patience and professionalism when encountering a rude woman will usually pay off.

If the woman is too busy when you call to conduct the interview, find out when would be a good time to call back. Do not be hasty in suggesting an appointment. Women who agree to appointments often do not keep them or, in the meantime, change their minds about participating. It is always better to get the interview on the first contact. Assure the woman that you will conduct the interview as quickly as possible.

- **Be Responsive to the Woman's Reasons for Reluctance.** If the woman is reluctant to do the interview, always listen to the reasons she gives. Respond directly to the points she has made and assure her that you understand her reluctance. Try to respond as directly as you can to her reservations. Never argue with a potential participant. Rather, leave the door open for another project team member to enter and pick up where you left off if necessary.

## 1. Initial Contact

Your initial contact with a woman is your first opportunity to establish rapport and capture her interest. You should be sure that your tone is pleasing and friendly, that you speak clearly, and that you know what you intend to say. Hesitation, due to your uncertainty about what to say or to what you wish to say, can create a negative impression on a telephone contact.

A woman's reaction to you as a person is very important. She will react more favorably if you seem to be someone with whom she will enjoy talking, and this will increase the likelihood of obtaining her cooperation during follow-up calls. Practice your introduction until you are completely comfortable with it. The time it takes to do this will pay off when you see the ease with which the rest of the interview will follow.

When you first speak to a sample woman, begin with reading the introductory script that identifies you and the survey.

*"Hello, my name is \_\_\_\_\_. I am with Children's National Medical Center and I work on Project HOPE. When you were last at (NAME OF CLINIC), one of our staff arranged an appointment for me to interview you on the telephone now."*

*IF NECESSARY, ADD: "At that time you completed an interview on the computer and agreed to participate in our project. If you agree to this interview you will receive \$15 the next time you visit (NAME OF CLINIC). As a Project HOPE participant you will be involved in several activities throughout your pregnancy. These activities were explained to you at the time you agreed to participate."*

*IF APPROPRIATE: "Let's begin with the first question."*

The script provides you with a clear and efficient way of introducing, yourself and the study to sample women. Practice the introduction until your presentation is confident and sincere. Rushing through an introduction gives an impression of a lack of confidence and may also cause the listener to misunderstand the message. Generally, do not pause before asking the first questions following the introduction. A pause will give the impression that you are waiting for approval or disapproval or for questions from the sample member.

## 2. Scheduling Appointments

Sometimes, a sample woman's time is limited, and you may have to complete an interview over multiple calls. In these instances, you will have to schedule a time to call her back. It is your responsibility to accurately record the necessary information for the next interviewer to ensure prompt appointment calls.

Be sure to review the record of calls (Section E of the Contact Evaluation Booklet, which is discussed in Chapter IV) for each case to prepare for your first contact with a woman. A new case will have blank spaces in the record of calls. As you make attempts, the record of calls will become more complete giving you an idea of the history of past contact events and what you can expect during your next attempt.

Because you will not necessarily be the interviewer who gets the next callback to the woman, it is imperative that you record all information that will help the next interviewer make the call successful. Be sure to document the details regarding break-offs, refusals, and other unsuccessful attempts to conduct and/or complete the interview.

### **3. Leaving Messages**

For this study, all of the project staff will have information on a participating woman that we need to guard and keep confidential. For example, the fact that she is pregnant may not be information that she may want other household members to know. Or, if she is in an abusive situation, just her involvement in the study may put her in jeopardy. Therefore, it is very important that we monitor what information is provided to other people about the study and a woman's involvement.

When a woman is recruited into the study, she will be asked to provide one or more telephone numbers where she can be reached. This information will be recorded on the Face Sheet (see Chapter IV) which you will receive. In addition, the woman will be asked:

*“If you are not available when we call, is it OK for our staff member to leave her name and a message that she called, or would leaving a message with someone else or on a machine cause you problems?”*

Her response will be documented on the Face Sheet as well.

If the woman is unavailable and if she has indicated no objection to project staff leaving telephone messages for her, you should identify yourself as being from Project HOPE. If you are questioned by the person answering the telephone, explain that you are calling from Children's National Medical Center about a project related to women's health issues. Do not mention the project focus on pregnancy and risk factors or indicate that the woman you are trying to reach is a participant in the study.

If the woman does not want any messages left, simply try to find out when she is expected to be available and indicate that you will call back at that time.



#### **4. Dealing with Reluctant Sample Members**

A professional interviewer never harasses or unduly pressures a potential respondent. On the other hand, interviewers need to be aware that participation by eligible women is extremely important to the success of a study and that refusals cannot be accepted without reasonable efforts to convince the woman to cooperate.

Some general suggestions for dealing with potential non-respondents are:

- Never take a comment or action of a woman personally. She does not know you and, if your approach has been professional, she is reacting negatively for reasons beyond your control.
- Recognize that many factors may result in a refusal even after the woman has agreed to be interviewed. These factors may not be a problem at another time. A call at another time may find the person in different circumstances and more receptive. Set a callback to conduct the interview.
- Make an effort to get a reluctant woman started with the interview by asking the first question at the earliest possible moment. Once started, most respondent's complete the interview.
- Attempt to keep a reluctant woman talking by making brief, positive, neutral statements in response to her comments.
- Avoid asking questions that can be answered "yes" or "no" by making statements such as "I hope you have time to help us today," or "Let's start now."

In spite of the best efforts of interviewers, refusals do occur occasionally. Generally, such cases will be followed-up by someone else in an effort to obtain cooperation and keep non-response at a minimum.

#### **5. Answers to Frequently Asked Questions**

Participating women may have a lot of questions and it may take some detective work on your part to get to the real question being asked. Some suggestions for responding approaches to various situations and replying to questions that may be raised by women are presented below. You must become familiar with the answers so that, when a question is asked, you can answer the question completely, competently and accurately. If you do not know the answer to a question, say that you do not but will be happy to discuss the issue with your supervisor and call the respondent later with an answer. Not every situation that you will encounter is covered; we will supplement the questions and answers as necessary throughout the data collection period.

### ***What is Project HOPE?***

Project HOPE is part of the NIH-DC Initiative, a city-wide program to reduce infant mortality in the District of Columbia. The purpose of the study is to evaluate ways to help pregnant women have a healthy pregnancy, reduce their chances of having babies born too early, too small, or sick, and help them take good care of themselves and their babies.

### ***What do I have to do?***

At the clinic where you go for prenatal care you already took part by using a computer to answer questions about your smoking, moods and feelings, and relationship with your partner. Now we want to call you throughout your pregnancy and right after delivery to ask you questions on the telephone about smoking, your moods, other pregnancies, and your relationship with your partner. And, we want you to provide saliva samples to see how much tobacco smoke you have been around. We also want to look at your medical records to get information about your health, and the baby's health, after you deliver. In addition, some women are asked to meet with our Pregnancy Advisor when they come for their prenatal care appointment to discuss things that may be important to them.

### ***What's in it for me?***

Your participation could help us find ways to help pregnant women have healthy pregnancies. In addition, each time you complete a telephone interview and provide a saliva sample, you will receive \$15. When you complete the final telephone interview and provide a saliva sample, you will also receive a certificate for a family portrait.

If you are asked to meet with our Pregnancy Advisor when you come for prenatal care visits, you will receive \$10 for each of these meetings to help with transportation and childcare. Two of these meetings will be held after the baby is born. For the first of these meetings you will receive \$10 and a \$15 gift certificate. For the second meeting you will receive \$10 and a \$25 gift certificate.

### ***Will my answers be kept private?***

Absolutely! Project HOPE team members will not share or discuss any personal information with clinic staff without your permission. Only Project HOPE team members will be able to see your answers to questions or your name. Everything is kept private and strictly confidential. None of your answers will in any way affect your medical care, benefits, any services you may be receiving (such as Medicaid, WIC, AFDC, TANF), or your job or immigration status.

### ***Who is doing this study?***

The National Institute of Health is paying for the study, and is collaborating with a group of D.C. hospitals to try to solve the problem of infants being born too early, too small, or sick. Besides the National Institute of Health, the institutions that are involved are:

National Institute of Child Health and Development  
NIH Office of Research on Minority Health  
Children's National Medical Center  
George Washington University Medical Center  
Georgetown University Medical Center  
Howard University Hospital  
Research Triangle Institute  
Washington Hospital Center  
Columbia Hospital for Women  
Chartered Health Plan

## **F. Standardization of Questionnaire Administration**

Standardization of interview administration means that, to every extent possible, every interviewer is administering every questionnaire to every woman in the same way. This helps to eliminate variability and interviewer bias, two factors that can seriously affect the validity, or "believability," of the data. The manner in which you as the interviewer ask the questions can vary, and it is this variability that must be minimized.

Following the guidelines listed below will help to ensure that you are administering the questionnaire in an unbiased, standardized manner.

- Always maintain a neutral attitude. Be careful that nothing in words or manner implies criticism, surprise, approval, or disapproval of the question or response.
- Ask the questions using the exact words printed in the questionnaire. Altering the wording of the question or reordering words or phrases within a question may affect the woman's answer.
- Ask the questions in the exact sequence in which they appear in the questionnaire, unless you are instructed otherwise. An answer to one question may influence an answer to another. The meaning of a question may change or be unclear if it is asked out of sequence.
- Ask every question specified in the questionnaire. Do not assume that the answer to an upcoming question has already been provided, because the answer received in the context of one question may not be the same answer that will be received when the question is asked directly.
- Repeat questions that are misinterpreted or misunderstood by the woman. If a woman asks you to explain, interpret, or define a word or phrase, you may do so only if the question specification (found in the Question-by-Question specification in Chapter III) provides a definition.

- Avoid suggesting answers to the woman. When providing answer choices, always read all of the choices listed.
- Use transition statements as they are printed on the questionnaire. Since there are several topics covered in the questionnaire, transitional statements will help the woman focus on a new topic as it occurs in the sequence of the questionnaire.
- Read the complete question, as printed. The woman may interrupt you and answer before having heard the complete question. When this happens, read the question again, making sure she hears it through to the end
- Read the questions slowly. As you become more and more familiar with the questionnaire, you may be tempted to read through the questions more quickly, perhaps in an effort to reduce the burden for the respondent in terms of the time spent doing the interview. However, you must remember that this is the first time she has heard these questions, and therefore you must read slowly enough so that she can understand everything you are asking. A pace of about 1 or 2 words per second is considered to be desirable.
- Record all responses immediately. Start writing as soon as the woman starts talking. If you miss part of a response, repeat what the woman has said up to that point, and then pause expectantly. Let the woman supply the remaining response.
- Record the response verbatim. Record the actual words spoken by the woman. Paraphrasing or summarizing may result in a distortion of the real response.
- Record legibly and in pencil.
- Do not leave an applicable question blank. If a woman does not answer a question, note the reason for the lack of response, either "refused" or "don't know," in the left-hand margin, next to the question.

## **1. Probing**

By following the procedures described in the preceding section, you will improve and standardize the manner in which you ask the questions. This next section discusses "probing," a technique used to help ensure that the answers given by the woman are as accurate and complete as possible.

Probes serve two purposes: they encourage the respondent to express herself completely, and they help the respondent focus on the specific requirements of the question. In order to know when to use a probe, you as the interviewer must be thoroughly familiar with the questionnaire and know the objectives of each question; that is, you must know what is being measured and what constitutes an acceptable response. Otherwise, you will have difficulty judging the adequacy of a response.

All probes must stimulate thought and response without suggesting possible answers. Neutral or nondirective probes are the only type that may be used. Some examples of proper probing techniques follow.

**Neutral Questions or Statements.** These probes encourage a woman to further explain or elaborate upon a response. These must be stated in a neutral or non-challenging tone. Some examples of neutral probes are:

*How do you mean?*

*What do you mean?*

*Tell me more about that.*

*Why do you feel that way?*

*Which would you say is closest to how you feel?*

**The Silent Probe.** A timely pause is the easiest and often the most useful type of probe. This lets the respondent know that you are expecting or waiting for additional information. However, you must be careful not to extend the silence too long over the telephone.

**Clarification.** Clarification probes are to be used when you think the respondent's answer is unclear, inconsistent, ambiguous, or contradictory. You must take care, however, not to appear to challenge the respondent; instead, tactfully express concern over not completely understanding the nature of the response. Examples are:

- *"I'm not quite sure I understand what you mean by that. Could you tell me a little more?"*
- *"I'm sorry, but a few minutes ago I thought you said [CONTRADICTIONARY INFORMATION]. Could you clarify this for me?"*

Sometimes the respondent will give you a range in response to an open-ended "number" question. For example, "I smoke 15 to 20 cigarettes a day." You should probe by saying *"I can only record one number on the questionnaire form --- is it closer to 15 or closer to 20 cigarettes?"*

**Active Listening.** This technique involves your conveying to the respondent that you understand what has been said, and you would like to hear more. This would be the use of phrases like *"I see..."*, *"That's interesting..."*, *"Uh-huh..."*, etc. An expectant expression is a means of demonstrating the technique of active listening.

**Repetition.** Repetition could be either repeating the question, or repeating the response. The former is useful when it appears that the respondent may have misunderstood the question, or deviates from the topic at hand. The latter technique of repeating the response may produce additional comments or explanation from the respondent, especially if you say it in the form of a question. For example, if you ask the question *"How many times did you feel this way?"* and the respondent says *"A lot,"* you could repeat to her by saying *"A lot?"* This will hopefully result in her providing you with additional details or information, such as *"Well, I'd say at least once every week."*

**"Don't Know" Responses.** When the respondent says *"I don't know,"* it can mean one of two things -- either she temporarily is not sure of an answer and needs more time to think, or she actually does not know how to answer the question. You must be prepared to discern between the two.

A respondent often will say *"I don't know"* when asked to offer an opinion or attitude. They may find it difficult to put their feelings into words. If you suspect this is the case, you should put them at ease by saying *"There are no right or wrong answers; just tell me how you feel about this question."*

If the woman simply appears to need more time to think about her answer, then wait silently and expectantly until she gets her thoughts together.

In the end, the respondent may insist that she does not know how to answer a particular question. Once you have properly probed for an answer, you should accept the response in the interest of not alienating the respondent, even if you believe she may be avoiding the question. Remember there may be times when she actually does not know the answer to one or more specific questions. In this case write "don't know" in the margin.

## **2. Using Feedback**

It is also important that you try to achieve a conversational feeling as you ask the interview questions. Make the interview comfortable. Some of the dialogue that takes place during a well-conducted interview is quite spontaneous. As an interviewer, part of your task is to make the woman feel comfortable answering the questions. This requires a degree of interaction that is unique to each interview. One of the most important aspects of this interaction is the feedback that you give to her. There are at least three reasons why feedback is vital to your work:

- Although you have learned how to be a good interviewer; the woman has not been trained in how to be a good respondent. During the interview, you will provide instructions to her regarding the task that you are asking her to complete. The feedback that you give is the only way that she will know if she is succeeding in the task.

- The woman may find that some of the questions difficult to answer because there may be some words that are used that may be unfamiliar to her. Feedback is the only way that you can encourage her to take the question seriously and spend a moment to think about her response. If she is unfamiliar with many of the terms used in the survey and becomes discouraged, try your best to assure her that it is all right if she does not know the answer.
- The feedback that you give is the best method of letting the woman know that you are listening to what she is saying. If you were conducting the interview face-to-face, she could see your acknowledgment for a complete response or see when you write down the answer that is she gives. During telephone interviewing, such visual communication is impossible, and it is only the words that you say that express your continued interest.

However care must be used in the feedback that you give. You do not want to give positive feedback when an incomplete response is given; nor do you want to forget to give positive feedback when a complete response is provided. At times you will need to use positive feedback to support the efforts of the respondent. At other times, you will need to give encouragement to her to provide more complete or more thoughtful answers. This will be the case when she answers very quickly and you feel that the question was not carefully considered.

Some examples showing the way that feedback might be used are:

**Positive Feedback when you receive a complete, well-thought out response:**

- *Thank you.*
- *This is just the type of information I need.*
- *I appreciate your effort in remembering these details.*

**Encouragement Feedback when you think the sample woman's answer is incomplete, or not well-thought out:**

- *I can wait if you want to think about it some more.*
- *As we mentioned, sometimes it's hard for people to remember everything. Perhaps if you think about it a little more you'll remember something that you missed. Was there anything else?*

### **Feedback if the sample member digresses from the interview:**

- *I see. Excuse me. I don't want to take more of your time than I need to.*
- *Let me repeat the question for you.*

### **3. Show Cards**

One barrier that is encountered when conducting telephone interviews is the problem for the respondent to comprehend and remember the answer choices to a question. This is especially true when (1) there is a long list of answer choices, and (2) there is a long list of items that have the same answer choices. Therefore, when a woman is recruited into the study at the clinic, she will be given a packet that will include show cards to be used during the evaluation interviews. These show cards indicate the response categories for specific questions that we regard easier for the respondent to answer if she is able to see the choices on a card.

One of the first things that you will establish, prior to beginning the interview, is whether the woman has the show cards available to use. If she does, the interview will be easier for you and for her, and the quality of the data will be improved. If she does not, you will have to work extra hard to make sure she comprehends and remembers the answer choices that you provide by repeating them as often as necessary.

At the appropriate question, you will see an instruction to you to tell the respondent the letter of the show card to use. To ease administration of the questionnaire, you can “train” the respondent to give you the code number that corresponds to her answer. However, even if the woman is using the show cards, you should read the answer choices whenever you are prompted to do so in the questionnaire. When the interview is complete, ask the respondent to keep the show cards in a safe place to use for the follow-up interviews. The show cards to be used for all evaluation interviews are displayed in Appendix C.

### **4. Types of Questions**

A pre-coded question is the most common type of question. The possible answers are listed under the question and you mark the answer selected by the woman. Sometimes the answer choices are read to the woman; other times they are not, especially when the choices are clearly implied, e.g., "Yes" or "No". Answer choices that are printed in CAPITAL LETTERS are not to be read aloud to the women.

Most pre-coded questions list all possible responses and are mutually exclusive. Sometimes, however, some choices overlap and in some situations more than one answer could apply. Unless you are otherwise instructed, you should probe and record only one answer. If the respondent gives more than one response, you can probe by asking her which answer comes closest to the way she feels or thinks, or which one best describes the event or activity in the question.



An open-ended question requires you to record, verbatim, the response given by the woman. The verbatim response may be a sentence or more, or a number, e.g., a date.

Dependent questions are asked only of some women depending on an answer given to a previous question. They can be either closed-ended or open-ended. A "skip" instruction is provided when questions are to be omitted because of a previous response. Interviewer instructions will be printed in CAPITAL LETTERS and are not to be read aloud to the women. If a skip instruction takes you to a question that is past the next page of the questionnaire, the instruction will identify both the question number and the page number. Always ask the next question unless, based on the respondent's answer, you are instructed to skip.